

In the Specification:

Please replace paragraphs [0007], [0010] and [0043] as follows, wherein the marked-up changes to the paragraphs are indicated:

[0007] Following the formation of the titanium nitride diffusion barrier, tungsten interconnects are formed by depositing tungsten through chemical vapor deposition with a tungsten hexafluoride precursor gas. If the titanium nitride diffusion barrier layer is ~~to~~ too thin to be an effective barrier to fluorine, the fluorine may attack the underlying amorphous titanium cobalt silicide layer resulting in a ruptured via producing an electrically open circuit.

[0010] It is an object of the present invention to form a via interconnect to a silicide region comprising cobalt or nickel, where an effective barrier layer comprising a group IVA metal nitride, e.g., titanium nitride, hafnium nitride, or zirconium nitride, is positioned between the silicide and via interconnect, wherein all references to the Group IVA notation complies with and refers to IUPAC Group IVA notation, which includes, for example, titanium, zirconium and hafnium.

[0043] A metal layer 21 comprising metals selected from Group IVA, using IUPAC Group IVA notation, of the Periodic Table of Elements is then deposited using conventional deposition techniques including, but not limited to: chemical vapor deposition (CVD), plasma-assisted CVD, high density chemical vapor deposition (HDCVD), plating, sputtering, evaporation and chemical solution deposition. Group IVA of the Periodic Table of Elements may include titanium, hafnium, zirconium, and combinations thereof. Following deposition, the structure is

then annealed in nitrogen-containing forming gas at a temperature of about 450° to 650°C for 15 to 90 min.